



*Brain Injury Association of Utah*

## **News Release**

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### **New Trust Fund Will Help Utahns with Brain Injuries**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – This month an estimated 212 Utahns will suffer a life-changing traumatic brain injury (TBI). There is new hope for these people thanks to some new legislation.

The Brain Injury Association of Utah (BIAU) today applauded lawmakers for passing HB 174, which establishes a Traumatic Brain Injury Fund. Sponsored by Rep. James Gowans, the bill creates an account that makes it possible to accept private donations and government funds for TBI services.

“This is a critical step toward making funds available to help TBI victims who need resources that aren’t covered by insurance,” said BIAU executive director Ron Roskos. The money may also be used to support TBI prevention activities.

Last year the BIAU received more than 3,400 calls from individuals and family members looking for TBI help. “More than 44,000 Utahns are now living with a long-term disability from a brain injury,” said Roskos, “and more than 2,500 new brain injuries occur each year. There is so much that needs to be done to help this population, and the fund is a great start. Now, we need the community to come together in support of the fund,” says Roskos. Support can be made through gifts, grants, donations, or any other conveyance of money from private sources.

According to Utah Department of Health (UDOH) data, the leading cause of TBI for those under age 65 is motor vehicle crashes, and males under age 30 are at highest risk. Those over 65 suffer TBIs most often in falls. “Our data also show that Utahns who are taking four or more medications have double the risk of falling and suffering a head

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## **Pg 2 of 2 – New Trust Fund Will Help Utahns with Brain Injuries**

injury,” said Kevin Condra, spokesperson for the UDOH Violence and Injury Prevention Program. “These incidents are largely preventable, but we still see an average of seven new cases that either require hospitalization or result in death every day.”

TBIs take a huge financial toll in Utah. In 2005, charges for motor vehicle-related TBI treatment topped \$26 million, while fall-related TBI costs hit \$19 million. These charges don’t include rehabilitation or other ongoing expenses associated with daily support services to the individual or family following the initial injury.

The new brain injury fund will be overseen by the UDOH. “We appreciate the support of the health department in agreeing to administer the fund,” said Roskos. “We wouldn’t have been able to get the legislation passed without their cooperation.”

For more information on TBI resources in your community, or to learn about the annual Family and Professionals Brain Injury Conference, visit the BIAU Web site at [www.biau.org](http://www.biau.org). For TBI data and prevention tips, visit the Violence and Injury Prevention Program Web site at [www.health.utah.gov/vipp/](http://www.health.utah.gov/vipp/).

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